DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 293 023 CG 020 671

AUTHOR Sugaya, Yoshiko
TITLE A Study of Aging in Society: Life-Course Analysis.
PUB DATE Jul 87
NOTE 11p.; Paper presented at the Biennial Meeting of the International Society for the Study of Behavioral Development (9th, Tokyo, Japan, July 12-16, 1987). Cover States, In Japanese: Report No. 19 from the Life Science Institute of Miyagi University.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Age Differences; Aging (Individuals); Cross Cultural Studies; Cultural Influences; *Daughters; *Family Relationship; Foreign Countries; *Life Satisfaction; *Marriage; *Mothers; Rural Urban Differences
IDENTIFIERS *Japan

ABSTRACT

The timing and order of life events must be studied from both cross-cultural and cross-temporal approaches since timing and order of life events in the aging process vary with sociohistorical change in different societies. This study examined the timing of marriage from the life-course perspective. Subjects were 52 rural Japanese mothers between the ages of 55 and 69 who were interviewed on the life events in the family of orientation and those in the family of procreation, and 117 rural Japanese daughters-in-law between the ages of 26 and 40. Differences were examined between Japan and the United States, between rural and urban communities, and between the older and younger generations. Results concerning the marriage rate, the average age at first marriage, and the respondents' perceptions of the age at which they married revealed that demographic, material, and normative factors shaped the patterns of the aging process. (Author/NB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED293023

生活科学研究所

研究報告

(2)

第 19 巻 vol. 19

別刷 1987

CG 020671

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☒ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Yoshiko Sugaya

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

1987

宮城学院女子大学
生活科学研究所

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

A Study of Aging in Society : Life-Course Analysis

Yoshiko SUGAYA

Abstract

The timing and order of life events must be studied from both cross-cultural and cross-temporal approaches.

In this paper, timing of one of the critical transitional events such as marriage is discussed (A. marriage rate, B. average age at first marriage, C. perception of the age entering marriage). I tried to examine the difference between Japan and the United States, between rural and urban community and between the older generation and the younger generation.

As individuals grow up and grow older in the changing society, we must research the interplay between aging and social change. I found out that demographic, material, and normative factors shaped the patterns of aging process by analyzing the empirical data from life-course perspective.

I Introduction

To study the historical change of the female life course, it is necessary to review the researches which examined the interplay between aging process and social change. Timing and order of life events in aging process vary with sociohistorical change in differing societies.

Riley (1982) showed us four central principles of the life-course perspective.

1. Aging is influenced by the society in which people live.
2. The ways in which people age are continually reshaping society.
3. Aging is a lifelong process of growing up and growing older.
4. Aging is a complex process composed of interdependent biological, psychological, and social sub-processes. (Riley, 1982 : 2-3).

A lot of empirical studies and fact-finding researches are needed to elaborate these principles. How is the aging process different in different countries? How did the process change from the past time to the present time? In this study, timing of marriage will be examined from life-course perspective.

II Data and Method

The data for this study are drawn from *A Study of Historical Changes in a Rural Family Life* survey, which was conducted in Shiwahime-cho, Miyagi Prefecture in 1985. In order to study the generational differences and changes, I conducted two kinds of empirical study.

First, *Mothers* (G1) between 55 and 69 years of age were chosen as respondents. They are called "grandmother" in three- or four-generation families. That is, i) one grandchild or more must live with them in the same household, ii) the eldest son (usually called heir) and his wife must live with them, and iii) the family name must be listed on a register book of farmhouses, are three necessary conditions as respondents.

52 *Mothers* were interviewed on both the life events in the family of orientation and those in the family of procreation—that is, marital life in multi-generational families in a Japanese

rural area. I used semi-structured questionnaires when I heard their life histories. In addition to this method, to analyze the inner perception of the meanings of life events and interactions between familial events and interactions between familial events and social environment, I used tape recorder. They talked their life histories freely so that I could use narrative documents after the interviews.

On the other hand, I made collective extensive research for 117 *Daughters-in-law* aged 26-40. Most of them are employed in factories or offices within the community. Most of their husbands are full-time employees too, and they used to work as farmers only during holidays. Three necessary conditions; i) one child or more must be alive, ii) their husbands are considered as heir, and iii) mothers-in-law must live with them in the same household were assumed. These respondents were asked to check their answers and opinions in the structured questionnaires; and, in part, they were requested to write their own opinions freely.

Then, I will draw the characteristics of the rural community where the research was conducted. This area is very famous for good-quality rice named "Sasanishiki". The reason why antecedent researches made in 1983 and 1984 by the author showed rather clear generational differences in the female life course is that the drastic transition from agricultural society to urbanized industrial society was occurred in this community On the other hand, generational continuity was showed in a high ratio of parents living with married child in the same household. Intensive intergenerational relations expressed traditional Japanese family solidarity. For example, members of multi-generational families eat meals together, play roles in domestic affairs each other and watch TV after dinner all together. The degree of family integration was very high in comparison with urban family life in which nuclear units lived rather separately and independently of each other.

Under these conditions, what is the dominant female life-course pattern in the case of *Mothers*? How old were they when they got married? Was the timing of marriage on schedule or not?

Table 1 shows the factors which affect the timing of life events in the passage from youth to adulthood. Sociology of age developed in the United States is a necessary theory as a basis of perception of timing of life events. To find out Japanese female life course patterns, I reviewed some researches made from life-course perspective in the United States. As the traditional family system and intergenerational relationships are quite different in these two countries, the most significant transitional event in adulthood and the most influential person as "convoy" are different from each other, too.

Ⅲ Findings

The Timing of Marriage

In Japan, when a young woman gets married with the eldest son called heir of *ie*, she used to live with parents-in-law and brothers and sisters-in-law in the same household at the beginning of marital life. She must adapt to a new way of life and to behavior patterns in her husband's family. She must change from daughter to wife (daughter-in-law) just on wedding day. Therefore, she perceives marriage as the biggest transitional event in her younger days.

On the other hand, in the United States, becoming a mother is a major source of change in female life; that is, parenthood is a bigger transitional event than marriage.

A. Marriage rate

As shown in Fig. 1, marriage rate per 1,000 population both in Japan and in the United

States, the highest historical rate occurred after World War Ⅱ. Then, several rises and falls followed, and recently, in the United States, marriage rate shows another increase. In contrast to this trend, in Japan, the recent data show a sharp decline.

With regard to demographic factors, later average age entering the first marriage and the

Table 1　Aging in Society (Female)

sociology of age	① chronological age = calender age ② social aging = social maturation ③ socio-historical cohort = generational unit	
items \ nation	Japan	United States
age norm	・social custom ・educational career ・urban／rural community	・social class ・size of community ・ethnic ancestry 〔D. P. Hogan〕
maturity	rhetoric of long engagement among intimates	self-reliance and independence 〔D. W. Plath〕
"convoy" as significant others	・(before marriage) mother ・(after marriage) mother-in-law	・(before marriage) family members ・(after marriage) husband
aging and social change	・wars ・amendment of law after WWⅡ ・family change with industrialization	・wars ・depressions ・inflation ・energy shortage 〔M. W. Riley〕
the biggest transitional event in adulthood	・marriage: need to adopt to a new life with husband and parents-in-law	・parenthood: becoming a mother is a major source of change in female life
living arrangement	・coresidence with husband's parents after marriage (husband = heir) ・living with married child in later life	living separate (neo-locality based on conjugal family system)
life satisfaction research in aging	aspects ・marital relations ・relation with mother-in-law as convoy ・adaptation to the multi-generation family ・hardship ・health	independent variables ・marital status ・retirement ・health ・housing ・social activity 〔N. Lohmann〕

declining proportion of young people (aged 20-29) of marriageable age in the total population have some effect on the marriage rate (Wells, 1983 : 10 -11).

As for female life course, women have equal right to men, for example, they can get higher education and they used to be hired as professionals if they want. With the women's liberation movement, pressures from parents to marry became decreased and the question to marry or not became to be a personal choice.

Fig. 2 shows an increase in the percentage of women between the ages of twenty and twenty-nine who remained single. In Japan, as age norm about women's marriage is rather rigid even now, about 70 per cent of women remain single in the twenty to twenty-four age group. Then, after twenty-five years old, women are considered to be wives according to social customs, so that about 80 per cent of women are married in the twenty-five to twenty-nine age group.

Shiwahime data in 1980 showed rather early marriage which was one of the characteristics of women living in rural communities. 45 per cent of women aged 20-24 are married and 88 per cent of women aged 25-29 are married in Shiwahime. This early marriaged rate expresses that the rigid timetable to marry and social pressures to marry young still remain in rural Japan.

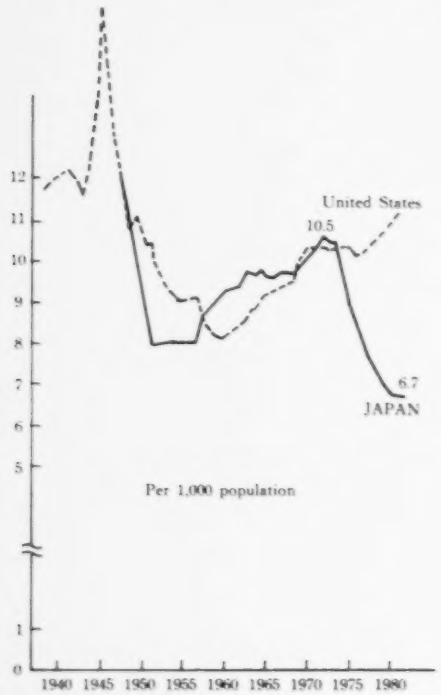

Fig. 1 **Marriage Rate** (United States and Japan)

Source : ① **United States : National Center for Health Statistics, U. S. Department of Health and Human Services.** [J. G. Wells, 1983 : 10].
② **JAPAN : National Census.** [T.Mochizuki, 1982 : 142].

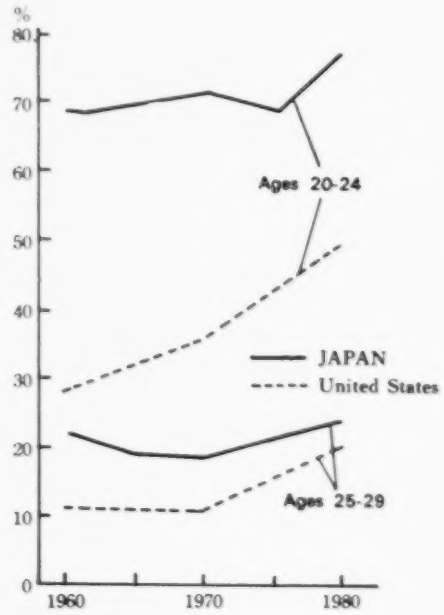

Fig. 2. **Women Remaining Single (Ages 20-24/25-29)**

Source : ① **United States : U. S. Bureau of the Census.** [J. G. Wells, 1983 :18].
② **JAPAN : National Census** [Population Census, 1984 : 49].

B. Average age at first marriage

In the United States, in 1960 the median age at first marriage for women was 20.3; in 1979 it increased to 22.1 (Wells, 1983 : 18). I can say that American women used to marry younger than Japanese women at first marriage.

Japanese women get married later than Western women. As shown in Fig. 3 average age at first marriage increased from 21.8 in 1930 to 25.2 in 1979.

In rural community like Shiwahime, how did average age at marriage change from the older age cohort to the younger age cohort? The results of the birth cohort analysis were drawn in Fig. 3, too. In 1930's, most of women get married in their late teens. In 1940's, women got married at twenty years old. After World War Ⅱ, a lot of women even in rural community became to graduate from senior high school and then they got married later than women before World War Ⅱ. From in 1960 to in 1980, the average age didn't change for twenty years.

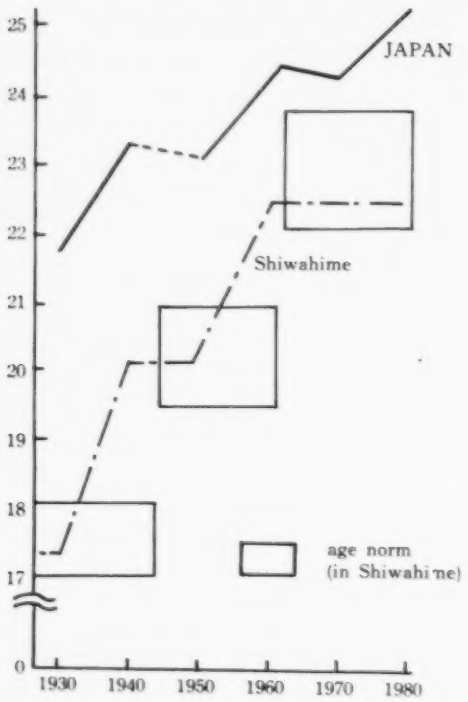

Fig. 3 **Average Age at First Marriage** (Females)

Source : JAPAN : the Ministry of Health.
[T. Mochizuki, 1983 : 48].

As for age norms, historical changes were shown clearly. Social norm on timing of marriage became later and later from 17 to 23 years old.

C. Perception of the entering marriage

How do women perceive the age at marriage ; that is, do they think that they got too young or too old? I tried the generational comparison in that how to perceive the age entering marriage. I asked their perceptions both when they got married and those in the present day.

As shown in Table 2, both *Mothers* (G1) and *Daughters-in-law* (G2) perceived the age entering marriage to be on time, but when they are asked to answer whether the timing of marriage is on time or not, referring to age norms of the present times, they change their answers. *Mothers* tend to answer they got married too young compared with young wives today.

Woman aged 66 said, "I got married when I was eighteen years old in 1937. In those days, normative age to marry was seventeen or eighteen years old. But, now I think I was too young to do anything as housewife. I finished only junior high school. I didn't study enough.

Table 2 **Perception of the Age Entering Marriage**

generation / time / perception	G 1		G 2	
	past	present	past	present
too early	26.9%	59.6%	26.7%	35.3%
on time	61.9	26.9	62.9	55.2
too late	10.2	3.8 (NA 9.7)	10.4	8.6 (NA 0.9)

I got married too young, sorry—."

Some women got married in late teens because they were female heirs who must keep material heritage secure and because it was necessary to marry young man (as farmer) in order to supply lack of labor forces.

Woman aged 71 said, "I got married when I was eighteen. As I was the eldest daughter, I was considered heir of *ie*. So, parents wanted son-in-law as soon as I graduated from junior high school. My father died when I was ten. Then, we suffered from poverty and lack of labor force. My mother and relatives made decission for me to marry. I wasn't able to say 'No.' I was seventeen-year-old bride. Too early, too young. I'm sorry. I would get married in 20 years old if I could."

Others got married in late twenties. The delay of marriage was caused by World War Ⅱ. About sixty years old women referred to the poor economic condition and the death of elder brothers because of the war. Women who got married in 25 years old perceived their marriage "too late" even now.

Ⅳ Concluding Remarks

In Japan, marriage is considered the critical turning point in female life course. Women must adjust the family life after marriage which is different from their original family life.

The timing of marriage was examined by using data drawn from a rural family survey. As one of the characteristics of the rural community, I can point out that age norms and informal sanctions are defined more clearly than urban communities.

Before World War Ⅱ, most of women got married in late teens. Why did they get married so young? They were obedient to the rural age norm to marry before twenty years old. People thought that a young wife could adapt to the behavior patterns of parents-in-law and that she

Table 3 The Timing of Marriage

Birth Cohort	Average Age	factors (early / late)
1900~1909	17.3	early marriage ・rigid age norm ・lower education ・poor economic condition ・decision making by father
	too early ・heir ・early death of father	
G 1 1910~1919		
1920~1929	20.5	WW Ⅱ
	too late arranged marriage	postponent of marriage ・marriage market (age-sex structure) ・*ie* heritage ・order of birth
1930~1939		
1940~1949	22.4	Economic Growth
G 2		
1950~1959		relatively late marriage ・higher education ・women's employment ・change of age norm
	love marriage	

would be an obedient daughter-in-law who were engaged in hard labor because of the innocence of young girl.

Though the age norm to marry changed from late teens to twenty years old, the early marriage didn't decline. Table 3 shows the factors which affected the early marriage. There are two important factors. In the first place, in case of female heir, woman was asked to marry young in order to keep family continuity. In the second place, non-normative event such as early death of father caused early marriage.

On the other hand, postponent of marriage appeared during World War Ⅱ. When women reached in marriageable age, young men went to the battle and most of them died young. Therefore, after World War Ⅱ, imbalance of age-sex structure caused late marriage to a lot of women. In addition to this historical background, family crisis caused by the death of brothers and shortage of food in the war time delayed the timing of marriage.

In female aging process, are women satisfied with their life? The percentage of satisfied women was shown in Fig. 4. *Mothers* (G1) perceived their life as to be full of hardship — they must be obedient to severe mothers-in-law under poor economic conditions.

In contrast to *Mothers*, younger *daughters-in-law* (G2) are more satisfied. Why are they happier than *Mothers*? They pointed out that the family economy became richer and richer and that the position of *daughters-in-law* became higher because of the reverse of the power structure in family life. In these days, the decrease in power and authority of mothers-in-law weakened their significance in multi-generational families.

Many narrative documents showed that the degree of life satisfaction was decided whether the relationship between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law was good or not. The significance of this in-law relation shows that mother-in-law plays the important role as "convoy" in female life course.

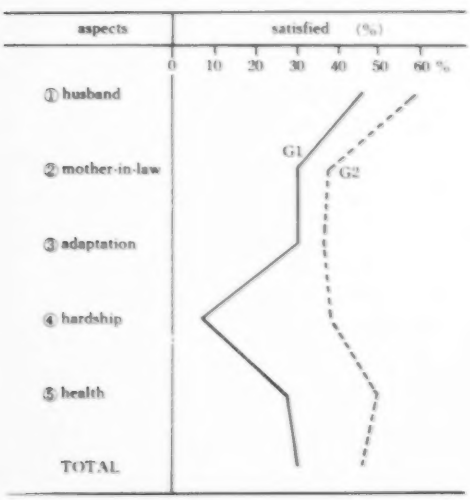

Fig. 4 **Marital Satisfaction** (G1/G2)

V **Issues for Future Research**

Comparative study on the temporal structure of the life course and its consequences should be a focus of future research. The normative regulation of life events is to be different both historically and culturally. People's lives—the ways people age over the life course from birth to death—depend upon where and when they live (Riley, 1982 : 3). Therefore, both cross-cultural and cross-temporal approaches are necessary to explore the aging process in society.

Why is the cross-cultural approach to the timing and order of life events essential for the life course studies? Because demographic factors are important for us to analyze the life course patterns based on birth cohort variety. Demographic, material, and normative factors shape the patterns of aging process. The age-sex structure of a social context and size variations across success-

sive cohorts will influence the delay of marriage, marriage rate and total fertility rate. Material influences are expressed in the correlation between the economic conditions and the ages of school completion, the first job, the first leaving home, financial independence, marriage and the birth of the first child. Some sociologists tried to ask such questions as sociocultural variability of aging—the general significance of age norms and social expectations.

With regard to normative influence, some research findings showed the rural-urban difference even in the same country. Elder (1978) considered community size as a key variable in the normative regulation of life events. In Japan, rural communities have rigid age norms and informal sanctions. In contrast to these areas, the cultural diversity is accepted in urban areas. This kind of assumption of normative variation must be examined by making a comparison between the rural and urban areas in a society.

To reach toward deeper understanding of the aging process, we must try to find the differences between the lives of past and present generations, and then the differences between the lives of present and future generations. Riley (1982) pointed out that there was a dynamic interplay between aging and social change. How is aging process influenced by the changing social environments? How do patterns of aging vary at differing historical periods? In turn, as people grow up and grow older to changing social norms, "such changes in their lives create social changes" (Riley, 1982 : 2). How do people's lives bring about changes in society? Then, we must research the interplay between aging and social change from historical and cross-temporal perspectives.

Last, we must focus on not only the life course of the individual but also the mutually contingent careers of the family units. How can we apply the life-course perspective to a specific life event and the family unit? It is essential to discuss problems of coodination and resource management at the family level.

Elder (1982) and Hill (1970) observed wide generational variation—even within each generation—in career management and the goal attainment. "Family progress in achieving goals on schedule was dependent on effective career management, the syncronization of transitions and activities in a manner which enables the multiple career lines of the family to be mutually supportive of movement toward life-style objectives" (Elder, 1982:31). Each family has a well-defined timetable based on social norms. What serves as a basis of self-evaluation when families perceive themselves as being "ahead of schedule" "on schedule" or "behind schedule"?

In Japan, few of research findings about the timing of life events, interactions between family and social environment and variation between generations are shown. Therefore, a lot of empirical researches on the life histories of both individuals and family units by using life-course analysis should be made. As AAAS Selected Symposium sought new interdisciplinary perspectives, we want to discuss in many fields of study such as sociology, life-span developmental psychology, economics, demography and history.

References

- Elder, Glen H., 1977, Family history and the life course, *Journal of Family History*, 2, 279-305.
- Hareven, Tamara K., (ed.), 1978, *Transitions : The Family and the Life Course in Historical Perspective*, Academic Press. esp. Chap. 1, Elder, Glen H. Jr., Family History and the Life Course, 17-64.
- Hogan, Dennis P., 1981, *Transitions and Social Change : The Early Lives of American Men*,

Academic Press.

- Mochizuki, Takashi, 1982, Mate selection in Modern Japan, *Kazoku-shi Kenkyu*, 6, 140-159.
- Modell, John, Furstenberg, Frank F. Jr. and Strong, Douglas, 1978, The Timing of Marriage in the Transition to Adulthood : Continuity and Change, 1860-1975, *AJS*, Vol. 84, 120-150.
- Morioka, Kiyomi and Mochizuki, Takashi, 1983, *The New Textbook of Family Sociology*, Baihūkan.
- Riley, Matilda White, Abeles, Ronald P. and Teitelbaun, Michael S. (eds.), 1982, *Aging from Birth to Death*, Vol. II : Sociotemporal Perspective AAAS Selected Symposium 79, Westview Press, Inc.
- Riley, Matilda White, Hess, Beth B. and Bond, Kathleen (eds.), 1983, *Aging in Society : Selected Reviews of Recent Research*, Laurence Erlbaun Associates, Inc. Publishers. esp. Chap. 2, Cherlin, Andrew, A Sense of History : Recent Research on Aging and the Family, 5-23.
- Sugaya, Yoshiko, 1986, Female Life Course and Life Satisfaction, *Journal of Miyagi-Gakuin Women's College*, 64, 55-86.
- Wells, J. Gipson, 1983, *Current Issues in Marriage and the Family*, Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc.